

FCC Comment Period response
Microradio RM 9208

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Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
The Portals
445 Twelfth St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20554

FCC MAIL ROOM

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Dear FCC Chairman William Kennard: (Re: RM 9208)

I am writing in support of proposal RM 9208, Microradio Broadcasting. Enclosed is 14 copies of this letter as required for your hearings.

I was very much impressed with your recent comments in the Chicago Tribune concerning the future of Microradio. You mentioned the advantages of the small broadcaster being able to service neighbors with low wattage operations. You talked of letting churches and advertisers finally being able to afford air time on smaller stations. You mentioned that it would be a great opportunity to allow young people to learn broadcasting techniques. Skills acquired in radio stations, also lead to careers in marketing and public relations.

During the past 30 years I have worked in 12 radio stations, and have written a 500 page book on the history of Chicago radio called "Valley Voices." I feel that I can speak with a bit of knowledge in support of Microradio.

All one has to do is turn on the local AM-FM station in my town of Elgin, Illinois to learn how bad radio has gotten over the years. When I started in radio in 1966. We chased fire trucks, broadcast sporting events, played good music, covered community functions, and were on the scene when something important happened. Sadly, the NAB and other agencies have allowed the infiltration of garbage programming to be on just about every local station across the country. I remember reading years ago, how stations broadcast local concerts, did local news, and covered important events in our towns. Now radio has become a vast wasteland of wind-up mouths (some often filthy), ethnic broadcasters, brokered shows, stations that sell things all day, syndicated talk, rock music, and programming for just about everyone else except older adults. This is what is on the air in our town today.

Last year my church tried to buy two half hour slots per week, and were interested in broadcasting our Sunday service. (First Church of the Nazarene of Elgin..our church is a more conservative form of the Methodist faith). We could not get any time on the local station, because they did not wish to interrupt Bruce Williams and his "Talknet" show..That is on for almost six hours a night, coast to coast. The station puts this on, thinking that no one is really listening. But what they have done is not given us anything to listen for. If it was not for a few newscasts and some high school games, the station would be best serving the public by just turning itself off. What has made matters worse is that the current station owner recently purchased another station in nearby Aurora, and puts the same garbage on that station as well. So we have then Chicago traffic reports, on a station that cannot be heard in Chicago, lots of syndicated talk, and hours of the home shopping show. This is not radio...it is a convenient way to fill up the broadcast day with stuff from various satellite services. All of the main staff have left, and the station also took off its local opinion program, where residents could call up and talk about local issues.

The people who run this station have money...They have the frequency designated for this area, but are not serving the public. They are probably backed by the NAB who will defend established broadcasters no matter what kind of trash they are putting out. They have had the total say in the market place for a long time,

and have cut back so far on local programming, that there is little reason to listen to them anymore. So why not give others a chance?

I will admit that I do not have any money. But if I could get with a number of interested persons who feel the same way I do, and raise the funds necessary for equipment, and a transmitter site...I know that we could do a much better job than what is on the air today.

There are a number of neighborhood- associations that could benefit from low wattage operations. There are probably few schools that have also wanted to get on the air. I am interested in establishing a 1,000 watt station that would serve our city of some 85,000 people. There are many civic minded persons who are trying to revitalize the downtown section of the city, and radio would be a great way to promote what we are doing. It is a shame that the local station that should be doing this, is more interested in selling things, and filling their broadcast day up with every bit of syndicated talk that they can get from the various satellite services that provide this kind of programming.

Granting us a license, would bring quality radio back to the city. It would provide opportunity for advertisers to afford to use the media to sell their services. There are many good ministers in our community who have a message to tell our citizens, but cannot be heard because the local station has priced them out of their budgets to use radio.

Since our local station will not interrupt their talk shows, missed are our school music programs, concerts, and other events that deserve air time. We could broadcast the city council and school board meetings live also to allow our citizens to be better informed.. An operation like a well-run community station would give students and young people an opportunity to learn grass-roots radio. It would also be a great place for senior citizens to spin the old songs and talk about the town's past.

These are basic radio ideas..but none of this is possible unless Microradio stations are licensed, so that real people, not someone coming in over a satellite dish can be heard in our communities. I am also an amateur radio operator and know and appreciate proper rules and operating procedures that would ensure a properly functioning station.

I hope that the FCC will push forward with the idea of Microradio. There are many small non-broadcasters that need a voice in the community that are getting no service from the established stations that offer nothing more than rebroadcasting the programming from satellite services. Then there is my idea that a community station could be built and operated by dedicated live people to better serve the town that I live in.

I hope that the FCC will see the need for some new blood in the business. We need to turn off those dish stations and allow private people concerned about their towns the opportunity to be heard in the market place of radio. Already the type of programming being presented...is filtering into the new X-band in the frequencies above 1610 khz. I heard something the other night that was so filled with sex and trash that I could not believe my ears.

Many years ago famed CBS commentator Edward R. Morrow stated that good radio was "proud, alert and fast." There is certainly nothing proud, alert and fast, about the stations in our area that just program junk all day. I hope that the FCC will allow for small groups of individuals to obtain licenses for Microradio stations, and allow people to be serviced again by caring people who intend to provide locally produced programming of benefit to the city. The people who own the stations now have failed miserably with their short-cut and repetitive satellite programming. It's time to give others a chance. I hope to be one of those that returns quality radio back to my city.

984 Bruce Drive Elgin, IL. 60120

Sincerely,
John Russell Ghrist
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